

WASTE BYTES!

Newsletter of the Maine State Planning Office, Waste Management and Recycling Program

MMA Meets in Augusta – Were You There?

The first week in October is usually when Michael Starn whips together the annual conference of the Maine Municipal Association. The conference has become a tradition, a home coming, where municipal officials network with each other, and with various vendors of services. At one time, the Maine Resource Recovery Association was an associate member of the MMA; however there now is a new connection between recycling and the MMA. The mother of our Lana LaPlante-Ellis held Michael Starn's position before she retired from MMA. The connection between the MRRA and MMA is still an amiable one - - both work to reduce municipal burdens.



When one goes onto the floor of the Augusta Civic Center, it is a reunion for the public and private sectors of many, including the Recycling Industry. This year, ecomaine's booth ended up next to Jetta's Maine Recycle's Campaign. Waste Management and Casella were a couple of aisles over but not far from the booth of the Maine Resource Recovery Association.

Those attending the convention made similar observations as those that were made at the recent meeting of the MRRA. While the attendance was good, there was still speculation that the numbers have been down a bit, at least in parts of the program, and there



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may have been a few less vendors. Let us hope that the economy and times turn around soon to let everyone get on with their business. It raises a question though: if you could select just one conference to attend each year, which would it be and why or what value would you place on it? Share your thoughts or requests at bruce.white@maine.gov.

Maine Recycles Week

Go to It!

Maine Recycles Week 2009 is on the horizon. For many, planning for MRW 2009 had started on November 15th of 2008. Others may not step forward with directions until November 1st and only a week left before the events are showcased.

It is our hope that like recycling in our state each community is able to do the best they can with the resources at hand. Each municipality deserves a slap on the back, congratulations for work well-done, and open recognition for their efforts to recycle.

Portland Has a Landfill for the Whole Family

October 10, 2009, was an open house at the “ecomaine” landfill. In all our visits to Blueberry Road, tours may have included the power plant, the MRF, or even Ruth’s Reusable Resources. However, we hadn’t had an opportunity to view their landfill.

Actually, “not in sight” is a good way to report about the landfill. Having visited the Waste Management Inc. Crossroads Landfill in Norridgewock last month to see the dedication of the methane power plant installed there, and now to see the ecomaine ash landfill, a few things jump out at the visitor and neither is a landfill. If it were not for the open house signs, one would never find the landfills. This was reinforced by the Yarmouth facilities manager, who had been recruited to do a presentation on composting, and began by apologizing for being late, as he kept driving by the entrance.



This is the unobstructed view to the North from the top of ecomaine’s landfill. Only a single flare tower and a few testing wells rise from the grassy slopes.

Atop the hill on outer Congress Street [Did I say “hill”? I meant to say grassy knoll.] , Kevin Roche, General Manager, and Shelly Dunn, Communications Director, had pitched their tent to welcome guests to their vantage point to take in the view of the surrounding landscape decorated by the fall foliage. This could easily become an annual event like a hike up the Bangor standpipe, which just happens to be a higher elevation.

The 33rd Common Ground Fair - - (No, was Cloudy and Rainy on Sunday)

Articles and even some conversations highlighted that this was the 33rd Common Ground fair. It wasn’t always held at Unity, so “Do you remember when?” was met by the elders with either “At Litchfield, we used to ...” or “At Windsor, we did ...” Overhearing what was being said made you realize that there really isn’t too much being done differently.

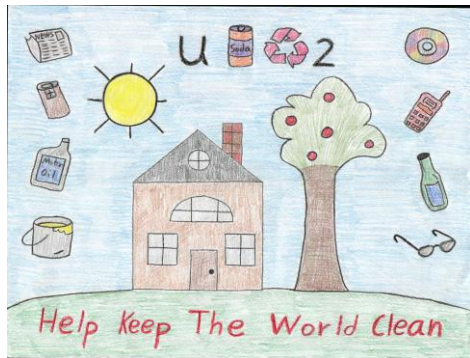


There are children asking, “Where is the Ferris wheel and other rides?” until they are introduced to sliding down a hill on a piece of cardboard or being invited to march in a parade around the Commons. Actually a step back lets one observe families together and few children off on their own. There is something for everyone: to see; to learn; to experience; or to buy.

As crowds have grown, the food court has a new flavor. While some reusable cups and bottles were in evidence, the presence of coffee on the grounds didn’t seem natural. Early memories of the Common Ground were of fresh cider and apples.

Green businesses have finally found Common Ground. Today the wind machine at the Common Ground was joined by a few businesses selling turbines at the Rose Gate, as well as several individuals reacting to proposed wind farms not in sight of the Appalachian Trail but on their neighbor’s farm. As the program noted, “the Greening of Technology” area has become the “Energy and Shelter” area.

Maine Recycles Week 2009 Posters Are Available



The 2009 Calendar cover by Livermore Falls High School Student.
The 2009 Maine Recycles Calendar cover adorns this year's Maine Recycles Week poster.

The Maine Recycles Week 2009 posters are now available and have been mailed to the municipalities and schools throughout the State. This year we would encourage individuals to order extras by going to our website or perhaps just reply to one of our announcements of "Waste Bytes!" by asking for the extra posters.

The poster selected by the MRW Steering Committee has received a nice welcome. At first, the simple message was deceiving. It actually took a few hours during judging, for some to realize the cryptic message – "You too can recycle!" Now it has kind of grown on us. We will have to wait until November to see how it influences this year's MRW posters. There are bound to be new surprises though with this year's theme: "Maine Recycles – Thanks to You!"

We are reminded at times like this that Maine Recycles Week represents not only recycling but also reduce and reuse ... and perhaps, just perhaps, helping your neighbor.

Common Ground – Fair (Continued from Page 2)

For several years, a not so objective estimate of crowd sizes could be calculated by asking how long anyone waited in line in traffic coming or going (The five minute idle rule could never apply to the fair - even though bicycles are promoted and the train is announced at closing time). On a break, if one were to wander over to the "Compost and Recycling" area, they could very well take another measure of the attendance. Volunteers in latex gloves (No sharpies here!) dove uninhibitedly into the trash dumped on sorting tables. 'Sympathy pain' could be experienced by those watching the volunteer empty a heavy, filled Schaeffer carts onto the tables to be picked over by the teams. Outside, compost piles stood as evidence of the work of another day.

While rain may have dampened spirits on the final day, early warning of Sunday's showers brought out the crowds earlier than usual. The Fair is something to look forward to. It sometimes is also beneficial to take a step back and take a hard look at what worked well at one time – especially in the world before plastic.

Family Landfill (Continued from page 2)

There is something about ecomaine open houses that stand out – each visit is an educational experience. On this Saturday, Anne Hewes, Environmental Manager, was conducting demonstrations with families testing water samples with litmus strips and explaining about where the samples were taken. Tours were being given by vans driven by Mr. Roche and Bud Waldron, Landfill/Ashfill Supervisor. Composting was farmed out to Yarmouth's Phil Hildebrandt; however his level of enthusiasm for the day and subject only complemented that of the "ecomaine" staff. Our thanks to each of them for what they do to educate the public.

Waste to Energy Landfill to Energy

When we speak of Waste to Energy in the Waste Management Hierarchy, we normally think of the municipal trash combustors - - trash being burnt and reduced by about 80% in volume and becoming a manageable ash for a landfill, as well as producing energy from the burning. A new kid on the block in the State of Maine is tapping the old man of the mountain for the methane gas. Landfills owned by Casella in Hampden and Waste Management in Norridgewock are supplying electricity to the grid.

With pipes laid throughout the landfills, methane is drawn off in quantities and may be cleaned before burning, or burned directly when quality is found right. The hill on the horizon is now a power station or energy source for the generator. In Maine, these companies have found a way to aid the current efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The combustion of the methane (a greenhouse gas) was previously flared off or released directly into the atmosphere. The greening efforts of these large companies are a product of scale.



The diagram at the corner of the tent set up for the dedication of the power station says it all – “Curbside to Power” as it displays a neighborhood with packer trucks hooked up .

Tune In to Get the Word Out

It all started with Lana asking if we had seen “Bill Green’s Maine” over the weekend. She then wondered out loud if Recycling had been one of the topics on before. What would the episode be like?

Well most of the Bill Green shows are about people. Who would you steer him to? Ron Slater is a good spokesperson and has a great operation. Victor Horton has represented the MRRRA for the longest of any director and knows the business and operations as well as anyone. Alan Lord would have a center location and perhaps even be my nomination for Mr. Congeniality.

It is “Bill Green’s Maine”, and it seems to have the appeal of covering the whole state. It showcases an active and energetic State. With recycling available to 95% of our state, one could throw a dart at a map and be proud of the operation in the community that was selected by a hit. Then again, some of the most interesting individuals that stand out for their desire, determination, and need to recycle are our friends on the islands.

When Bill Green recently visited the University of Maine’s Research Facility at Highmoor Farm’s anniversary open house, he did a sequence on the Maine Compost School and composting. It seems like Mr. Green has a gift for finding unique activities, out of the ordinary locations, and the supporting authority or guide.

The “Bill Green’s Maine” show has another appeal that generally stands out. With many episodes there is a quality of examining what are common and interesting subjects to some and become rare and entertaining experiences to others. As popular as the show is, it might be guessed that there are many stories to be told about and shared in Maine.

The next part of the conversation with Lana was focused on the ad campaign. What ideas would make a good show? My mind wandered though and turned to Waste Bytes. Who what, why, when, where, and to what extent would you want to share a story or your story about recycling? Feel free to send me the e-mail, and we can share it with all those who are with us - up to our wastes in recycling.

